

Need Technicians to Man Push-Button Ramparts

By VICTOR RIESEL

The Russians may be peaceful at the summit, but back home they are swiftly preparing for a push-button war. They are training hundreds of thousands of electronic and aeronautical warriors, scientists and technicians at a rate which is outnumbering our own skilled men more than two to one—on the land, on the sea and most certainly in the air.

We just don't have the skilled, scientific manpower in our factories, labs and armed forces that we need to match the Russians button-for-button in a futuristic war, according to Central Intelligence and other Federal agencies recently alerted by the White House.



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ALL THIS IS GRIMLY evident as we seek the technicians to build ourselves a defensive, as well as offensive, war machine. About the only area in which we have enough men for the H-era, is the construction field. There we're experimenting with new concrete mixers, new types of building material and new designs to withstand maximum explosions.

Already, AFL construction union chiefs are discussing

their role in this new anti-bomb building program.

Elsewhere, we are running out of skilled workers. Earlier this year, for example, General Motors needed exactly 480 expert tool and die makers for an emergency retooling project. The corporation just couldn't find them in the U. S. It had to scour the world.

THAT'S THE WAY it is in almost every new technical defense project today. We're even running out of skilled men to handle routine defense weapons around our big cities—for, after all, that's what the guided missile, NIKE, is today, a routine anti-aircraft defense. But with a difference. The old guns, which were such familiar sights to many of us, could be handled by a few quickly trained men.

Now, according to Labor Secretary James Mitchell, the new anti-aircraft weapon is made up of 1,500,000 parts. It takes 100 skilled men to handle. And there are literally hundreds of NIKE bases around our key metropolitan areas. Not only do we need the skilled 100-man teams to oper-

ate those underground concrete NIKE stations, but we need the thousands of skilled technicians to turn out the hundreds of millions of parts for the NIKE batteries.

We're building supersonic bombers which will startle even today's blasé public. But we may not be able to service them. We need more than the old "grease monkey" who knew a simple engine. We need aeronautical engineers. We don't have them. The Russians do.

THE SOVIETS have been graduating at least 1,200, and probably 1,400 such engineers a year since 1951. Back then we did turn out 1,725 such technicians. But the college men have lost interest in this field. Last year we graduated only 645.

Such courses are scattered in 55 colleges in the U. S. The Soviet aeronautical training is concentrated in seven carefully nurtured institutions. These are tough schools. They have a five and a half year curriculum. Grading of students is strictly handled. Each technician is personally handled. Those with just two non-passing grades are dropped.

WE HAVE the Central Intelligence Agency word for it that the Russians are outstripping us by hundreds of thousands of trained technicians. CIA director Allen Dulles reported last month

that Russia will turn out 1,200,000 science graduates before 1960. We may turn out 900,000 by that time.

Meanwhile, we're also falling behind in the training of skilled men who make up the rank-and-file of unions. Electrical workers must now be electronics experts. Aircraft workers must be able to put together miles of wiring for just one plane.

Union chiefs, approached by the government, are fairly helpless.

They are beginning to report that it is difficult to round up needed maintenance crews for the complex automatic machines on the industrial front—let alone the electronic squads which will be needed in coming years. The Machinists' Union, for example, has been running "ads" in its newspaper for skilled workers needed in an atomic energy installation in New Mexico.

Every government agency, from mobilization to the Labor Department, is worried. Conferences are being called in all regions. Everybody's talking about training apprentices. But there just aren't enough apprentices. We are becoming a nation of un-mechanical, highly paid white collar people in an era when scientists and engineers are needed to help the nation survive.

Could be, couldn't it, that we just are not paying enough for the type of brainwork we need?

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